

Glossary

Aquifer: An underground rock formation composed of materials such as sand, soil, or gravel that can store and supply ground water to wells and springs. Most aquifers used in the United States are within a thousand feet of the earth's surface.

Cleanup: Actions taken to deal with a release or threatened release of hazardous substances that could affect public health or the environment. The term is often used broadly to describe various response actions or phases of remedial responses, such as the remedial investigation/feasibility study (RI/FS).

Comment Period: A time period for the public to review and comment on various documents and USEPA actions. For example, a comment period is provided when USEPA proposes to add sites to the National Priorities List (NPL). A minimum 30-day comment period is held to allow community members to review and comment on a draft RI/FS and proposed plan; it must be extended an additional 30 days upon timely request. A comment period is required to amend the record of decision (ROD). Similarly, a 30-day comment period is provided when USEPA proposes to delete a site from the NPL.

Community Involvement (CI): EPA's program to inform and involve the public in the Superfund process and respond to community concerns.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, And Liability Act (CERCLA): A federal law passed in 1980 and modified in 1986 by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act.

The Acts created a special tax that goes into a Trust Fund, commonly known as Superfund, to investigate and clean up abandoned or uncontrolled hazardous waste sites. Under the program, USEPA can either: 1. Pay for site cleanup when parties responsible for the contamination cannot be located or are unwilling or unable to perform the work; or 2. Take legal action to force parties responsible for site contamination to clean up the site or pay back the federal government for the cost of the cleanup.

Feasibility Study (FS): See Remedial Investigation/ Feasibility Study.

Five-Year Review: Section 121(C) of CERCLA, as amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986, together with the implementing regulation in the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan, require that remedial actions resulting in any hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants remaining at the site above levels that allow for unlimited use and unrestricted exposure be reviewed every five years to assure

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protection of human health and the environment.

Ground water: Water found beneath the earth's surface that fills pores between materials such as sand, soil, or gravel. In aquifers, ground water occurs in sufficient quantities that it can be used for drinking water, irrigation, and other purposes.

Information Repository: A file containing current information, technical reports, reference documents, and Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) application information on a Superfund site. The information repository is usually located in a public building that is convenient for local residents, such as a public school, city hall, or library.

Monitoring Wells: Special wells drilled at specific locations on or off a hazardous waste site where ground water can be sampled at selected depths and studied to determine the direction of ground water flow and the types and amounts of contaminants present.

National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP): The federal regulations that guide the Superfund program. The NCP was last revised in February 1990.

National Priorities List (NPL): EPA's list of the most serious uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites identified for possible long-term remedial response where money from the Trust Fund may be used. The list is based, primarily, on the score a site receives on the Hazard Ranking System (HRS). USEPA is required to update the NPL at least once a year.

Operable Unit: Operable units are areas within a site that are organized for investigation and cleanup based on their similarities. This expedites the investigations and provides for a more efficient cleanup.

Operation and Maintenance (O&M): Activities conducted at a site after a response action occurs to promote that the cleanup or containment system is functioning properly.

Proposed Plan: A public participation requirement of CERCLA in which USEPA summarizes for the public the preferred cleanup strategy, rationale for the preference, remedial alternatives presented in the detailed analysis of the remedial investigation/ feasibility study, and waivers to cleanup standards of CERCLA Section 121 (d)(4) (which allows changes in cleanup standards under limited circumstances) that may be proposed. The proposed plan may be prepared either as a fact sheet or a separate document. In either case, it must actively solicit public review and comment on all alternatives under consideration.

Record of Decision (ROD): A public document that explains which cleanup alternative will be

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used at National Priorities List sites. The record of decision is based on information and technical analysis generated during the remedial investigation/ feasibility study and consideration of public comments and community concerns.

Remedial Action (RA): The actual construction or implementation phase that follows the remedial design of the selected cleanup alternative at a site on the National Priorities List.

Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study : Investigative and analytical studies usually performed at the same time, and together referred to as the RI/FS.

They are intended to: 1. Gather the data necessary to assess the type and extent of contamination at a Superfund site; 2. Establish criteria for cleaning up the site; 3. Identify and screen cleanup alternatives for remedial action; 4. Analyze in detail the technology and costs of the alternatives.

Remedial Response: A long-term action that stops or substantially reduces a release or threatened release of hazardous substances that is serious but does not pose an immediate threat to public health or the environment.

Responsiveness Summary: A summary of oral and written public comments received by USEPA during a comment period on key USEPA documents, and EPA's responses to those comments. The responsiveness summary is a key part of the ROD, highlighting community concerns for USEPA decision-makers.

Selected Alternative: The cleanup alternative selected for a site on the National Priorities List based on technical feasibility, permanence, reliability, and cost effectiveness. The selected alternative does not require USEPA to choose the least expensive alternative. It requires that if there are several cleanup alternatives available that deal effectively with the problems at a site, USEPA must choose the remedy on the basis of permanence, reliability, and cost effectiveness.

Superfund: The common name used for the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act; also referred to as the Trust Fund.

Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA): Modifications to CERCLA enacted on October 17, 1986.